Sanders Alibi 'Fixed' And Laughlin Knew It, Ex-Convict Says

Guard Bribed to Alter Records of Visits to Prison, He Testifies

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BALTIMORE, Sept. 11.—A former inmate of the Florida State Prison farm, who admitted he is now under bond in Georgia on a charge of kidnaping and assaulting a sheriff, testified in Federal Court today that he and other prisoners falsified records in the Florida institution in 1941 to provide an alibi for a client of James J. Laughlin, Washington attorney, now on trial on charges of impeding justice, and that Mr. Laughlin knew of it.

The witness, Hugh Gibson, who gave his home as Albany, Ga., recited a prison record dating back to 1927 and involving charges of forgery, possession of counterfeit money, hijacking and smuggling whisky.

Gibson, second witness to be called by United States District Attorney Bernard J. Flynn, declared that two affidavits he signed early in 1942 saying that Hilliard Sanders visited him on September 25 were untrue.

Used in Sanders Defense.

The affidavits were used by Mr. Laughlin in the defense of Sanders when the latter was tried for participation in the robbery of bank messengers from the Prince Georges County Bank & Trust Co., in Hyattsville on September 25, 1941.

Gibson said Sanders visited him at the Florida prison farm one Sunday afternoon in 1941 after he had not seen the man for five years. The witness said he had to "show him out," but that Sanders left $400 with him and told him he would return.

The second time Sanders came to the prison farm, a few days later, Gibson said, he made arrangements to get Gibson an attorney who would help get him out of prison. Gibson then said that Sanders returned again after a few days to say he had to leave in a hurry but had deposited $700 with an attorney to be used to get Gibson a pardon.

As a result of this generosity, the witness said, he and a fellow-inmate decided that although Sanders actually had made his first visit on September 28 they would change the records to show he had been there September 25. He said they gave $25 to the secretary of the captain of the guards to change his records.

Talked From Prison.

Gibson said Mr. Laughlin was then notified of this arrangement and that in a telephone conversation late in 1941 Gibson told Laughlin that "everything was fixed for Sanders."

"You mean you talked from the prison?" Judge John Paul inquired.

"That's right," the witness replied.

"You told of this fix on the prison phone?"

"That's right, sir."

"What kind of a prison is that?" the judge snorted.

Gibson said Mr. Laughlin later came to visit him and asked if he could obtain affidavits from other prisoners for Sanders. The witness

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aid the attorney then gave him a 10 bill and told him he would come back.

Laughlin Blames Rosenman.

In his opening statement to the jury, Mr. Laughlin, acting as his own attorney, charged that Judge Samuel Rosenman, a White House adviser, dictated his prosecution.

Mr. Laughlin alleged that an "unholy conspiracy against me" was the result of his earlier participation in the mass sedition trial in Washington.

"This red line of corruption runs right through the White House," the attorney told the jury in his opening statement. He said that agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation went to see prisoners in Federal penitentaries and told them that "Samuel Rosenman of the White House wanted me out of the way, and that if they would testify against me they would be out of prison in a few months."

Flings Charge Against Flynn.

The defendant also charged that Mr. Flynn "does only what he is told, and that his direction came from Rosenman at the White House because of my participation in the sedition case." Mr. Laughlin revealed that he had entered the sedition case as an attorney for one of the defendants at the request of Senator Langer, Republican, of North Dakota, who sought his aid, Mr. Laughlin said, because the man was penniless.

The Washington attorney was eliminated from the sedition case because he sought impeachment of the presiding judge, Chief Justice Edward C. Eicher.

In detailing what his defense would be in the present case, Mr. Laughlin said, "there was great feeling directed at this defendant" during the course of investigations by the United States attorney's office and members of the FBI.

"Accepted" Sanders' Statement.

"The statement of Sanders was accepted by this defendant in good faith," Mr. Laughlin told the jury. He said that Sanders has steadfastly maintained that he was actually at the prison farm on that day and that he was innocent of any part in the robbery.

Mr. Laughlin said he visited the Florida prison farm and examined the records which showed Sanders had been a visitor on the day in question. He said the superintendent of the farm recalled Sanders had visited the place on three occasions during the period in which the Hyattsville robbery took place.

Flynn Details Charges.

Mr. Flynn, addressing the jury, said the Government would show that when Mr. Laughlin introduced testimony concerning the Florida visit, he knew it too be incorrect.

"He knew the records were to be changed so he would have a defense for his client," the prosecutor declared. He said the superintendent of the prison was "fooled and deceived" by the changing of the records and by conversations with inmates. Sanders' defense, he said, was "purely a trumped-up thing, entirely false, for the purpose of obstructing justice."

Meanwhile, Mr. Laughlin filed a petition with the court asking that Mr. Flynn and several jail officials be held in contempt of court for holding six defense witnesses in places of confinement other than the Baltimore City Jail.

Mr. Laughlin said that Sanders, Kenneth Palmer and George Peabody, all brought from the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary; Robert Noble, brought from the District Jail, and Frank J. Kane and William P. Croswhite, formerly of the Atlanta prison, are being held in the Maryland State Penitentiary here.

Judge Paul rejected a request by the defendant that the witnesses be brought to the courtroom from day to day during the proceedings.

"The character of these witnesses is such that you must realize that some care must be taken as to their custody," the jurist said.